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ABSTRACT

Intended for boards of education, teachers, and concerned citizens, the manual suggests means of evaluating state laws and public school services for mentally retarded students. Guidelines provide information on right to education legislation and litigation, suggestions for citizen monitoring of school services, and a list of resources. Presented is a checklist to evaluate state law provisions for compulsory attendance, classification and placement, definitions, administration, early and continuing education, physical facilities, materials, transportation, personnel and supportive services, funding, and parent involvement. Recommendations for obtaining new laws are given. Considered in the checklist for evaluating classroom programming are educational goals, curriculum, and individual program plans. An additional checklist covers curriculum skill objectives for the following areas: physical development, mobility, and coordination; sensori-motor development and integration; self-care, grooming, and personal hygiene; communication; and self-direction, social behavior, and work. (IM)

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Monitoring the Right to Education

A Manual to Help Citizens Evaluate Public School Services for Mentally Retarded Students

ABSTRACTED-CEC ERIC

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Foreword

The passage of public school laws or the issuance of court orders does not guarantee that mentally retarded students will receive appropriate educational services within the public schools of this nation. The right-to-education must be supported in philosophy and practice by local boards of education, teachers and concerned citizens. It is at the community level where the right-to-education truly becomes a reality.

Recent success in achieving educational services for mentally retarded students has revealed that even the best education laws and regulations may be misinterpreted and/or poorly implemented by the public schools. In view of the considerable autonomy of local school districts in America today, citizens in every community must take responsibility for ensuring the faithful and appropriate provision of educational opportunities for mentally retarded persons.

Laws do not enforce themselves. If parents and other citizens do not take an active role now, the educational future for countless thousands of mentally retarded persons will remain uncertain!

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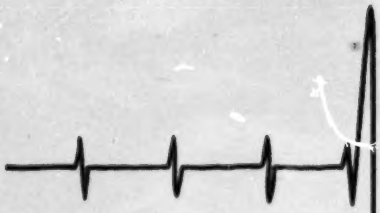


Introduction

Despite the gains made in providing public school classes for mentally retarded persons, laws and regulations in many states still enable school authorities to exclude certain children from a free public education. Recent estimates are that more than one-half of the school-aged mentally retarded population is not receiving public school services. Such exclusion is particularly evident in the case of children with problem behavior or severe handicaps.

In January, 1971, the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens, on behalf of the parents of 13 retarded children, brought suit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania against the State of Pennsylvania for failure to provide all mentally retarded children with a publicly-supported education. The landmark decision rendered in this case established a "zero-reject" system of education in Pennsylvania for mentally retarded persons between the ages of six and 21.

A series of parallel right-to-education suits have been mounted in other areas of the country, and the topic of legal action has been the subject of in-depth discussions in the professional literature. At the same time, a number of states have passed new legislation or modified existing laws so as to establish a zero-reject system of public education.

Zero-reject in the public schools means that mentally retarded children can no longer be excluded from educational services because:

- there are special age, mental age and IQ requirements for admission which preclude the enrollment of mentally retarded persons;
- children must be toilet-trained before they may be admitted to school;
- behavioral or physical problems are used as an excuse for denying public school services;
- public school classes are not provided for mentally retarded students or existing classes for these students are full; or
- there is not enough money to provide educational services for all children in the community.

Clearly, the goal of zero-reject for all mentally retarded students has not been achieved in every state. However, progress has been made, and with the help of concerned parents and educators, full educational opportunity may become a reality throughout the nation in the near future.

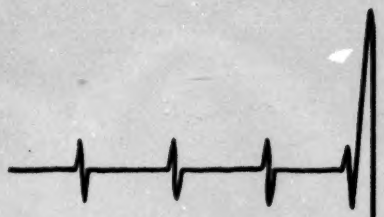
Monitoring School Services — Where to Start

The degree of independence that local schools have in determining the way children will be educated in a given community is clearly related to the extent of citizen involvement in the affairs of the public schools.

Traditionally, local schools have worked with considerable flexibility within the framework of state education legislation. Every state has education statutes or codes which cover the organization and administration of public school services. These statutes address themselves to such areas as compulsory attendance, qualifications of teachers, public school financing and other pertinent aspects of the state educational system. Sometimes the comprehensive school law is supplemented by special codes for handicapped children and / or regulations which specify the procedures to be followed in providing school services. In addition, state education agencies or commissions (operating under the state school laws) certify teachers, provide a list of textbooks from which local schools may select and suggest a curriculum for use by the local schools. However, it is the administration and school board at the local level which hires and fires teachers, makes the final selection of textbooks and has a large voice in determining who will actually attend classes and who will not.

A state must first have an adequate and comprehensive school law or code, but **local citizens must assume responsibility for monitoring the way local schools interpret and implement these statutes**. This means that persons in the community must take the initiative in:

- obtaining copies of state education legislation, regulations and codes;
- forming committees and / or identifying qualified individuals to assist in reviewing current education statutes and regulations;
- learning the composition of school boards and the philosophies of individual school board members;
- keeping informed with respect to school budgets, bond elections and other fiscal matters;
- writing letters and making phone calls to influence persons;
- speaking up at public meetings where school related decisions are made;
- visiting schools and actually observing what occurs in the classroom; and
- evaluating classroom activities and educational outcomes.



A good beginning would be to gather a basic library on the subject of educational rights. A number of state associations for retarded citizens have developed useful written materials which you may request for your files. These include:

A Parent Guide to Special Education, by the Iowa Association for Retarded Citizens, 1707 High Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50309.

You Can Get Your Child into School, by the Virginia Association for Retarded Citizens, 817 East Main Street, Suite 1801, Richmond, Virginia 23219.

Take Steps for Your Child's Right to Education, by the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens, 1500 North Second Street, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102.

The EPPC . . . And the Role of the Parent Representative, by Michigan Association for Retarded Citizens, 416 Michigan National Tower, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

There is also a book which describes how parents of children with disabilities can fight for their own needs and rights:

Let Our Children Go, by Douglas Bilken, Human Policy Press, Box 127, University Station, Syracuse, New York 13210.

For more information and practical advice concerning the right-to-education movement, you might also want to obtain a copy of:

Know Your Rights, by Closer Look, Box 1491, Washington, D.C. 20013.

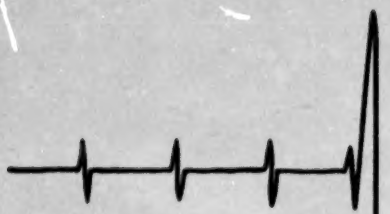
Due process protection for handicapped children is fully discussed in a recent publication:

A Primer on Due Process, by The Council for Exceptional Children, Publication Sales, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

Information about court actions on behalf of mentally retarded citizens is covered in:

Mental Retardation and the Law, by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Development, President's Committee on Mental Retardation, Washington, D.C. 20201 (DHEW Publication No. OHD 76-21012).

A Continuing Summary of Pending and Completed Litigation Regarding the Education of Handicapped Children, by the State-Federal Information Clearinghouse for Exceptional Children, The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.



The Law and That Other Minority, by Alan Abeson and Frederick Weintraub, printed in the *School Psychology Digest*, Volume 3, Number 1, Winter, 1974, pages 44-54.

Legislative issues and a model law are discussed in:

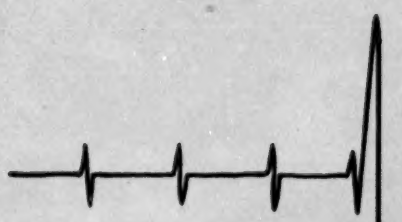
State Law and Education of Handicapped Children: Issues and Recommendations, by The Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

The above publications are just a few of those currently available, and more are being written every day. However, these references would provide a basic library with respect to the right-to-education movement. The remainder of this manual will provide other information and resources which may prove helpful.

Evaluating Education Laws and Codes

As mentioned previously, you should obtain and carefully review copies of your state education laws and regulations. These may be requested from the office of the Governor, the state education agency or the administrative offices of the local school system. Discuss these statutes and regulations with your school principal, the director of pupil personnel services, director of special education and/or the superintendent of schools in order to determine the degree of compliance. If these individuals are unwilling to participate in such discussions, contact your state education commission or agency for assistance in establishing a dialogue with the schools. The address of your state education director and agency may be obtained from the administrative office of your local school system or by writing to the office of the Governor in your state. Remember, citizens have the right to information concerning the operation of their schools, and public officials must make such information available upon request.

The following checklist was designed to help you review your state laws and regulations. It is subdivided into major sections for your convenience. However, the provisions listed on the following pages will not necessarily appear in this order nor under these headings in your state statutes.



Checklist for Evaluating Public School Laws

Compulsory Attendance

Many states do not require local school systems to identify or provide educational services for all mentally retarded children. Those states having required services do not necessarily have compulsory attendance rules. Therefore, your state law should be evaluated in terms of the following questions:

_____ Are school authorities clearly responsible for the education of every child?

_____ Is provision made for an annual school census which identifies all preschool-aged children?

_____ Are parents required by law to cooperate in a system-wide school census in order that every child be identified?

_____ Are school authorities required to count the number of handicapped children receiving services and those who remain unserved?

_____ Are public school authorities required to undertake public information campaigns to ensure that every child is identified before the age of five years?

_____ Are all children of the same age span required to either attend public school or other schools monitored by the responsible public school agency?

_____ Is it stated that private schools are not to be used to diminish the responsibility of local school districts to expend funds and efforts on behalf of handicapped children?

_____ Are there no exceptions in the law which allow the exemption of certain children because of intellectual, behavioral or physical problems?

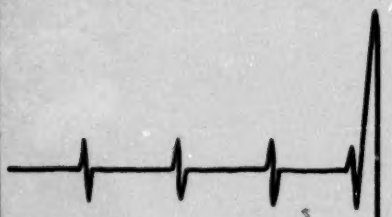
_____ Are the schools operated on the grounds of state-owned, residential institutions for mentally retarded individuals administered by the public education agency?

_____ Does the law say that, whenever possible, residents of state-operated institutions are to be educated in public schools separate from the institution?

Classification and Placement

Children are sometimes incorrectly classified as mentally retarded and assigned to special education classes because of behavioral, cultural or linguistic problems. Other children who are mentally retarded do not necessarily require placement in special education classes. Examine your state law for the following provisions:

_____ Is classification for school placement based on the specific learning needs of children rather than psychological, medical or other categorical descriptive systems?



Is standardized test data supplemented by information concerning the child's adaptive behavior in the home and community, as well as in a variety of school learning situations?

Are parents involved as significant participants in the evaluation of their children?

Are classification decisions made by a multi-disciplinary committee composed of regular classroom and special education teachers, school psychologists, administrators, parents and other participants selected according to the child's handicap (e.g., speech therapists, physical therapists, audiologists, etc.)?

After placement, is there a procedure outlined for regularly scrutinizing the continuing appropriateness of school curricula, educational methodology and teacher competency?

Are placements to be reviewed at least annually?

Are parents or guardians to be provided notice of proposed changes in educational placement which specifies the reasons for such changes and the legal authority upon which the action may occur?

Are parents to be provided information about their right to contest the proposed action before an impartial hearing officer?

Are parents to be informed of their right to counsel, cross examination, presentation of independent evidence, a written transcript of the hearing and independent evaluation of the child at public expense?

Definitions

The way that handicapping conditions are defined in a state law may effectively exclude certain groups of children or inappropriately include others such as the so-called "borderline" in classes for mentally retarded students. The language of these definitions must be carefully scrutinized.

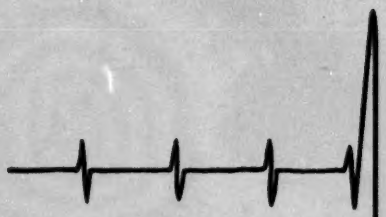
Does the state definition of "handicapped" include all children, with no exceptions, who may need special education services?

Are all levels of mental retardation specifically mentioned, including mild, moderate, severe and profound?

Are mentally retarded students defined as those individuals who function two or more standard deviations below average, with respect to intellectual and adaptive behavior?

Administration

In principle, at least, our nation subscribes to the philosophy of providing publicly-supported educational opportunities for all citizens. The administrative responsibility for providing educational services is vested in the state education agency and the public schools. However, state agencies and facilities other than those charged with the education of children are sometimes



inappropriately given responsibility for the education of mentally retarded persons or certain subgroups of this population. This practice has been justified in the past on the basis that mentally retarded persons cannot learn skills useful to society and need special forms of medical or custodial care separate from other members of society. Another justification has been that retarded children do not possess sufficient behavior control or self-care and verbal skills to make them amenable to traditional school programming. While it is true that an exceedingly small portion of the mentally retarded population may need highly specialized services, we know today that the problem lies more in our concept of education than in the difference between retarded and non-retarded students. Public education must begin assuming its full responsibility in this regard and design appropriate public school facilities and services for all retarded children and young adults. The following questions relate to these concerns:

_____ **Is there a state education agency or commission which has administrative responsibility for the education of all children, including mentally retarded students?**

_____ **Does the state agency have a division or department which gives direction and has specific responsibility for the education of handicapped children?**

_____ **Is there a state level advisory board for the education of the handicapped which works with the state director of education?**

_____ **Is there provision for a comprehensive state plan for the delivery of educational services to handicapped students?**

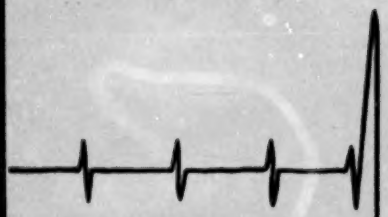
_____ **Is there a mechanism specified for local schools and school districts to cooperate in the provision of special services when population and / or geographic factors make the provision of services by a single district infeasible?**

_____ **Is the practice of purchasing educational services for handicapped children from private, non-profit, or profit-making agencies firmly discouraged unless no other alternative is available?**

_____ **Are provisions made for resource teachers, special aids and special services when mentally retarded students are to be educated in classrooms along with their non-retarded peers?**

_____ **Is the administration given latitude in designing a flexible system of special classes appropriate to the variety of learning needs characteristic of mentally retarded students?**

_____ **Is flexibility allowed in the establishment of teacher-pupil ratios to take into consideration differences in student age and level of skills?**



Early and Continuing Education

Entrance into school programs has, in many cases, been significantly delayed for mentally retarded persons on the grounds that they need longer to attain the mental age levels prerequisite to success in school programs. This disregards the fact that the best time to begin ameliorating a child's disability is during the first years of life. It is also important to realize that education is a life-long experience and that the rapidly changing environment in which most retarded adults must live necessitates continuing education to ensure competence in handling problems of daily living. Therefore, state education laws should incorporate provisions for both early and continuing education programs.

_____ **Is education viewed as an ongoing process beginning at birth and continuing throughout the life cycle?**

_____ **Are the schools encouraged to begin implementing preschool programs for handicapped children, including home training for infants during the first year of life?**

_____ **Does the law specify that cooperative working relations be established with other state agencies, such as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in order to develop relevant programs of continuing education?**

Physical Facilities, Materials and Transportation

It is not uncommon that classes for mentally retarded students are held in the oldest, smallest or least desirable rooms in a school facility. In other cases, these classes are confined to a special wing or annex. Parents may also be required to assume the cost of any special educational materials and arrange for the transportation of their children to and from school. Ask the following questions when reviewing your state law:

_____ **Is it specified that school facilities will be appropriate to the physical and learning needs of handicapped children?**

_____ **Are special classrooms for mentally retarded students to be equal in quality to those used by the non-retarded?**

_____ **Are classes for handicapped children to be located near or within school buildings for regularly enrolled pupils of the same age?**

_____ **Are the schools required to eliminate architectural barriers which might impede independent locomotion by physically handicapped students?**

_____ **Are equipment and supplies to be provided by the local school district at no extra cost to parents or guardians?**

_____ **Is it specified that the materials and supplies provided for special classes will be at least equal to those provided for non-handicapped children?**

_____ **Will special transportation be provided handicapped children at public expense, particularly if a child is required to travel beyond his neighborhood school to attend a special education program?**

Personnel and Supportive Services

Although there are many highly qualified special education teachers today, the majority have not been prepared to work with severely handicapped students. In some cases, non-certified teachers have been employed and continue to work without proper supervision or supportive services. As the number of severely handicapped students in the public schools increases, the need for competent personnel will become more acute. Therefore, a firm stance must be taken now to ensure that future teaching positions are filled by teachers who have had appropriate university training, as well as supervised preservice experience with children similar to those they will be employed to teach.

_____ **Are teachers of mentally retarded students required to meet at least the same technical and personnel qualifications as their counterparts working with non-retarded pupils?**

_____ **In addition, are teachers required to have successfully completed a university program which includes methods and techniques, curriculum and supervised teaching experience with mentally retarded students?**

_____ **Are teachers required to periodically complete additional university course work related to the field of mental retardation?**

_____ **Are the schools required to establish a program of inservice training for teachers and other personnel who work with handicapped children?**

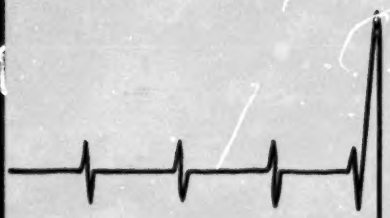
_____ **Is there a policy against the use of teacher aides and volunteers to replace qualified teachers in classrooms for mentally retarded students?**

_____ **Are there provisions for the use of resource teachers, teacher aides and volunteers to work in conjunction with regular classroom teachers?**

_____ **Is there provision for the use of consultants, such as physical and occupational therapists, in planning and implementing programs for handicapped children?**

Funding

To be implemented, educational legislation must have a realistic and workable funding base to ensure adequate facilities and services. Since educational funding is closely tied to other state laws and regulations, many different funding formulae have been developed throughout the nation. It will be necessary to study your own state's funding policies in order to determine if fiscal allocations for the education of handicapped children are equitable and appropriate.



_____ Is state financial aid to be provided in each school year for the education of severely handicapped students?

_____ For purposes of state aid, are handicapped children counted in the same manner as other children?

_____ Is provision made for reimbursement from the state for any excess cost above that required for students in regular classrooms?

_____ Is the state education agency empowered to apply for, receive and administer federal aid for which the state may be entitled?

_____ Are special funds specifically earmarked for costs associated with the transportation of handicapped children?

Parent Involvement

Although parents have a right to be closely involved in the operation of public school programs, it is not unusual for educational plans and decisions to be made without the benefit of parental input or participation in goal setting for their children. Therefore, educational legislation should specifically outline the school's responsibilities with regard to increasing parental participation in the education process.

_____ Does the law specify that school systems must have a formal mechanism for ensuring that parents are informed of all aspects of the school program?

_____ Are parents to be encouraged and provided an opportunity to participate in school planning and decision-making?

_____ Are parents to be kept fully informed of current programs and teaching techniques?

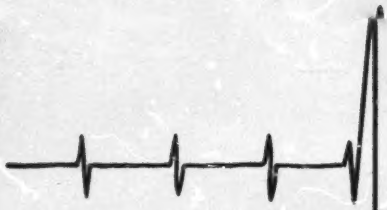
_____ Is provision made for necessary assistance and support to enable parents to implement complementary training efforts in the home?

_____ Are parents to be periodically reminded of their rights to view school records, budgets and other data about the operation of the schools?

Obtaining New Laws

It is highly unlikely that any state education law will contain all of the provisions suggested in the preceding checklist. However, an adequate law should take these provisions into account. If you desire to see a new state law written and passed, here are some points to consider:

- Passage of legislation requires the backing of large numbers of people who are willing to devote long hours to the task.



- Legislators and the general public must be informed about current laws and policies and why revision is needed.
- The support of key legislative leaders and, if possible, of the Governor should be gained. Model laws must be drafted and presented along with documentation concerning the need for legislative action. Keep your governmental officials informed and involved.
- Enlist the cooperation of other special interest groups with a shared concern for the education of handicapped individuals. Let them assist in the drafting of the proposed legislation.
- Be sure to involve personnel from the state education agency or commission early in your campaign. This agency will be greatly involved in the implementation of the law once it is enacted.
- Be prepared to conduct public education, telephone and letter-writing campaigns. Make presentations to civic groups such as the League of Women Voters.
- Organize a press conference at the time the legislation is being introduced. Be prepared to make statements or provide testimony at legislative hearings.

Once new legislation is passed, your task is not done. As discussed previously in this manual, citizens' groups must monitor the way legislation is implemented and keep legislators informed of developments. Also, remember that it is the executive branch of state government which writes the regulations outlining the way legislation is to be carried out. Therefore, continued involvement is necessary long after a new law is enacted.

Evaluating Public School Programs

Once mentally retarded students are enrolled in public school classes, the next important consideration is whether the students are being provided appropriate educational programs.

In our democratic society, the family is vested with the primary rights and obligations regarding the education of their children. The public schools, then, must ensure that parents are given a responsible voice in educational policy making, planning activities and the daily operation of the public schools. Citizens also have a right to enter public facilities such as the public schools and to be informed about what occurs in these establishments. This is an important and necessary function. The present system of public schooling in this nation was not designed to leave the business of education strictly to the professionals, even though citizens many times appear content to abdicate their rightful role to elected school board members who may or may not represent their best interests.

The following checklist was prepared to assist parents and other concerned citizens in their efforts to evaluate and monitor public school programming for mentally retarded students.

Checklist For Evaluating Classroom Programming

The emphasis today is clearly away from self-contained classes as the primary strategy in special education. The ideal is variety in special and regular class placements to accommodate the differing learning needs of mentally retarded students, including resource teaching programs in association with regular class placement, special classes with integration in one or more academic subjects, and self-contained classes for some children with highly specific and / or unusual learning needs such as the profoundly retarded student. Regardless of placement type, there are several general principles which should characterize all programming; i.e., the programs should be designed to:

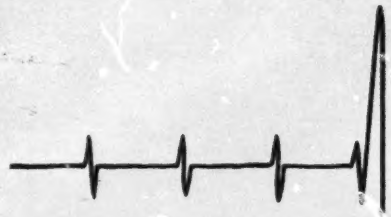
- increase the complexity of students' behavior;
- increase students' control over their environment; and
- foster culturally approved behavior

When evaluating classroom programming, one should particularly seek evidence of continuing evaluation of individual performance. Such evaluation would not necessarily be of a formal psychometric nature but rather may be based on frequent observations and the maintenance of behavioral data. One would expect to find evidence that individual learning objectives have been periodically modified as a result of on-going evaluation, and that students have been transferred among program components as dictated by individual learning needs.

Curriculum

Every school has some form of curriculum document which provides the comprehensive educational plan for all students. The state education commission or agency usually takes the initiative in recommending a curriculum for handicapped students. Such a document should contain:

- a list of general curriculum content;
- specific learning objectives for the various content areas;
- activities and suggested teaching materials related to the objectives;
- procedures for measuring student performance; and
- methods for achieving generalization of learning to a variety of related activities.



As will be discussed in the next section, individual program plans for each student can be prepared using the recommended curriculum guide as the primary resource tool. Therefore, the curriculum must be more than a simplified version of the curriculum for non-retarded students. Rather, a comprehensive curriculum for mentally retarded students should include learning objectives and activities related to the skill categories outlined below. This checklist is grouped according to broad functioning areas and ranges in difficulty from the most basic skills appropriate for young and/or severely handicapped students to those complex behaviors which would be expected for mildly retarded individuals.

Physical Development, Mobility and Coordination

_____ Proper body positioning

_____ Passive exercise

_____ Body rolling, creeping and crawling

_____ Head and trunk balance activities

_____ Standing practice

_____ Ambulation practice

_____ Walking on ramps and stairs

_____ Running, skipping, jumping, balancing and climbing

_____ Riding vehicles

_____ Purposeful hand use

_____ Marking with pencil, cutting with scissors, stringing beads, pasting and assembling

_____ Using playground equipment

_____ Participating in track and field events

_____ Using community parks, playgrounds and other recreational resources

_____ Exercising for muscle tone and weight control

_____ Developing skills related to crafts and fine arts

_____ Dancing and folk games

_____ Water play and swimming

_____ Learning to cope with hazards

_____ Participating in competitive sporting events

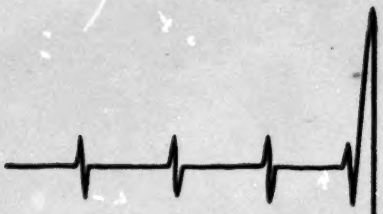
_____ Gymnastics

Sensori-motor Development and Integration

- Stimulation of sight, hearing, touch, smell and muscular response
- Identifying shapes, colors, sizes, locations and distances
- Identifying sound patterns, locations, tonal qualities and rhythms
- Identifying textures, weights, shapes, sizes and temperatures
- Sorting, transferring, inserting, pulling and folding
- Responding to music, signals and warnings
- Making personal choices and selections
- Discriminating sizes, weights, colors, distances, locations, odors, temperatures, etc.
- Recognizing similarities and differences
- Using plans of search
- Using time and place concepts
- Recognizing potential dangers
- Using visual and auditory memory
- Operating machinery and using tools
- Work related activities involving movement, balance, sensory discrimination and memory

Self-Care, Grooming and Personal Hygiene

- Taking nourishment from a bottle and spoon
- Drinking from a cup or glass
- Finger feeding
- Mouth control and avoidance of drooling
- Using eating utensils
- Choosing foods and practicing dietary variety
- Eating in public restaurants
- Meal preparation
- Food preservation techniques
- Purchasing foods
- Appropriate nutritional habits
- Passive bathing, handling soap and participating in drying



_____ Washing hands and face

_____ Self-bathing

_____ Caring for hair, teeth, nails, shaving and menstrual needs

_____ Blowing nose

_____ Using cosmetics and deodorants

_____ Maintaining current hair styles

_____ Removing garments

_____ Participating in self-dressing

_____ Buttoning, zipping and snapping

_____ Selecting appropriate clothing for different temperature and other weather conditions

_____ Selecting clothing for different social occasions and activities

_____ Care and maintenance of personal clothing

_____ Purchasing clothing

_____ Toilet regulation and scheduling

_____ Indicating the need to eliminate

_____ Using the toilet independently

_____ Locating toilet areas in public places

Communication

_____ Listening to sounds

_____ Vocalizing

_____ Responding to gestured and verbal requests

_____ Identifying objects by name

_____ Recognizing names of familiar objects

_____ Responding to verbal requests

_____ Imitating speech and gestures

_____ Using gestures, words and phrases

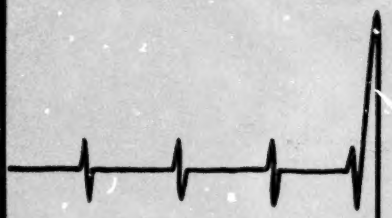
_____ Listening to a speaker

_____ Following directions or instructions from memory

_____ Understanding verbally stated relationships

_____ Using descriptive, action and relationship words or phrases

_____ Expressing feelings and sensations verbally



Using correct speech volume and enunciation

Knowing when to speak

Organizing thoughts and relating experiences in sequential form

Using telephone and other communication media

Developing functional reading and writing skills

Self-Direction, Social Behavior and Work

Recognizing familiar persons

Occupying self for brief periods

Manipulating toys and other objects

Requesting personal attention

Playing individually alongside other children

Playing cooperatively with other children

Sharing, taking turns and waiting for instructions

Traveling with supervision

Completing assigned tasks

Using self-protective skills

Going about surroundings without supervision

Behaving appropriately in a variety of social situations

Posture and mannerisms

Participating in social clubs and organizations

Using public transportation

Using community shops and stores

Knowing laws and rules of the community

Amenability to supervision, punctuality, persistence and other job related behaviors

Interpersonal relationships involving peers of the same and different sex, younger and older persons and persons in authority

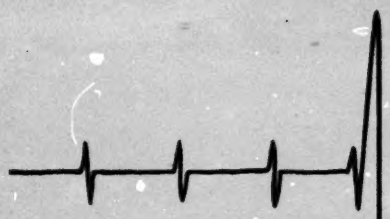
Consumer education, including money management and budgeting

Independent and group recreation and leisure skills

Maintenance of residence and personal possessions

Using social welfare agencies and services

Marriage and family living



Job selection and realistic job expectations

Securing, maintaining and terminating employment

The preceding curriculum items were not intended to be all inclusive. However, they cover a wide range of areas which should provide a frame of reference for examining any curriculum document developed for all levels of mental retardation.

Individual Program Plans

In the past it was common for educational programs to be derived on a group basis for use with students who fit some criterion, such as IQ. Thus, one curriculum was applied to all students who were classified as "educable" and another to those classified as "trainable." Since there are vast differences in the previous educational experiences and functional skills of mentally retarded students, the desirable approach is to develop individual program plans appropriate to the learning needs of each student.

The individual program plan is a written plan which specifies learning objectives for a student and outlines progressive steps and a time frame for the achievement of the objectives. It is based on individual assessment and other information about the student and is developed by relevant teaching personnel in conjunction with family members. Plans developed at the onset of services must be frequently reviewed and updated on the basis of student progress. Therefore, it is important that the objectives be stated separately and expressed in behavioral terms that provide measurable indices of progress. Here are some questions to ask and things to look for when examining individual program plans:

Is there an individual program plan for each student?

Are individual program plans developed in concert with the student, the student's family, school personnel and persons from other agencies who may be serving the child?

Do program plans differ among students?

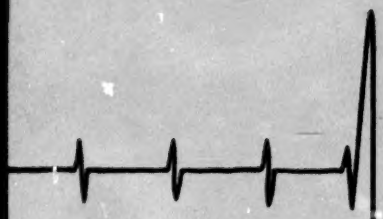
Is the program plan developed on the basis of observations and current assessments with respect to the intellectual, sensori-motor, communication, social and emotional development of the student?

Are the objectives in the plan stated in functional terms that are understandable by all persons?

Is progress in achieving the objectives measurable?

Are the objectives to be accomplished within a stated time frame?

Is there a stated mechanism for periodically reviewing and modifying objectives as indicated by student performance?



Does the plan specify the roles and objectives for each person involved in the implementation of the program?

Is the relationship between current objectives and long-range goals evident in the individual program plan?

The type of instructional materials or activities in the classroom are secondary to: (1) the precise delineation of skills within a particular curriculum area; (2) the division of those skills into their component parts; (3) the logical progression of learning activities to accomplish short and long range objectives; and (4) the constant monitoring of student progress. Various instructional tools may be used by different teachers to achieve similar learning objectives. Thus, determining the reasons for selecting certain skills for instruction is probably more crucial than evaluating the types of instructional tools that may be employed. However, it is important to know if classroom materials and activities are appropriate to the age and interest level of the students and whether the instructional program is conducive to the transfer of learning from school to the home and community.

The importance of continuous evaluation of student progress cannot be over-emphasized. The classroom teacher should be able to show you daily progress records wherein specific behaviors (as specified in the objectives) are counted, graphed or otherwise charted. If such records are not available, it is possible that the individual program plan exists only on paper and is not actually being implemented.

A Final Word

To achieve quality educational programming, the National Association for Retarded Citizens firmly believes that it is essential for parents and other concerned citizens to establish positive working relationships with educators, and to become actively involved in the operation and monitoring of public school services. The previous sections of this manual have attempted to provide information which would be useful in this relationship. Although the evaluation of school laws and classroom programs was presented separately, the materials are not mutually exclusive and should be used together in monitoring the total education process. The identification of students and their placement, the way services are administered and financed, the qualification of teachers, and the way physical facilities and materials are utilized—are all important to educational programming. When complete educational services are finally gained for each mentally retarded student, it will undoubtedly be through the efforts of many energetic and knowledgeable citizens who have worked closely with educators and lawmakers in every state and local community.

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